



# DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

## INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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### NEW FLAG RAISED ON AMERICAN SOIL AS NEW AGENCY CELEBRATES JULY 4

A new flag was raised on far distant American soil, but no panic-stricken refugees fled from invading forces, for the Stars and Stripes were still flying above the new banner of the Fish and Wildlife Service, Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes announced today after receiving a report of the incident from Service officials in Alaska.

The flag of the new conservation agency, which was formed on June 30 by consolidating the Bureau of Biological Survey and the Bureau of Fisheries, was unfurled on St. Paul Island, about 350 miles from the mainland of Alaska. Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson, director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, raised the standard as some 200 residents sang "America," accompanied by the local Aleut band.

Designed for the occasion and still unofficial pending approval, the flag consisted of the Department of the Interior emblem, the buffalo, in white on a red circle in the center of a blue field. In each corner was a figure in white, a moose being in the upper left, a blue goose in the upper right, a salmon or trout in the lower left, and a fur seal in the lower right corner.

While heavy clouds hung over the far outpost in the Bering sea and the temperature ranged from 44 degrees in the morning to 55 degrees in the afternoon, the group of Government employees, fur company workers, and Aleuts spent the entire day in a unique July 4th celebration.

Dr. Gabrielson, who is making an inspection of the wildlife resources of Alaska, reported that Independence Day was appropriately celebrated in the morning by baseball and other athletic events. In the afternoon, the little colony of fur sealers gathered for the formal exercises.

Assistant Director Charles E. Jackson, who is accompanying Dr. Gabrielson on his tour of the Territory, was introduced by Lee C. McMillin, agent in charge of the island reservation. Mr. Jackson pledged the cooperation of the former Bureau of Fisheries staff in the new Service.

During the ceremonies, Seton H. Thompson, assistant chief of the Division of Alaska Fisheries, read the July 4, 1872, entry from the Pribilof Island official log book. He traced the history of the seal reservation from the early days when the seal herd was under the jurisdiction of the Treasury Department, to its transfer later to the Department of Commerce and Labor, and then to the Department of Commerce.

When the Bureau of Fisheries was transferred to the Department of the Interior in 1939, jurisdiction over the Pribilof Island Reservation was also shifted. On June 30, 1940, the consolidation of the two bureaus into the Fish and Wildlife Service brought the islands under that conservation agency.

Dr. Gabrielson delivered the Independence Day address. He touched on the work of the Service and impressed his listeners with the fact that the new organization is charged with the conservation of all phases of wildlife.

Then while the Aleut band blared away, the populace faced the flag pole and sang "America" while the Fish and Wildlife Service banner was raised beneath the Stars and Stripes, which fluttered in the cold Arctic wind that swept down on the tiny group celebrating its independence on an island in the Bering Sea.

The flag was designed by Mrs. Lee C. McMillin, wife of the agent in charge of the island; Mrs. R. J. Walters, wife of the dentist on the reservation; Mrs. G. Roger Chute, wife of the assistant to the agent in charge; Seton H. Thompson; and Frank G. Ashbrook, in charge of the Section of Fur Resources, Division of Wildlife Research.

The Pribilof Islands are a group in the Bering Sea, composed of two larger ones, St. Paul and St. George, and two smaller ones, Otter and Walrus. They are often called the Fur Seal islands, because the seal herds are found in this area. Discovered in 1786 by the Russian pilot Pribilof, the islands were first called Novy, meaning new. Later they were named in honor of the owner of the vessel from which the islands were first seen. The name changed four times until a cartographer named them Pribilof, after their discoverer.

The islands were included in the purchase of Alaska from Russia in 1867 and were made a Government reservation in 1869.